

Message Text

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TAGS: MASS, IS

SUBJ: PERES' VIEW OF ISRAEL'S MILITARY SUPPLY PROBLEMS

SUMMARY: IN TOUR D'HORIZON WITH MINDEF PERES ON JAN 13, AMBASSADOR
RAISED SUBJECT OF PERES' RECENT MEETING WITH SECDEF RUMSFELD
AS WELL AS CURRENT STATUS OF ISRAEL'S MILITARY SUPPLY. PERES
EXPRESSED GENERAL SATISFACTION WITH HIS MEETING BUT SAID THERE
WERE STILL SOME BOTTLENECKS IN THE ARMS SUPPLY LINE. END SUMMARY.

1. PERES SAID THAT HIS MEETING WITH SECDEF WENT WELL-
"NOT PRAGMATIC BUT PLEASANT". FROM HIS POINT OF VIEW, A
PRINCIPAL PURPOSE WAS TO RESPOND TO ALLEGED PENTAGON
CRITICISM OF ISRAEL. PERES SAID GENESIS WAS 1974 PENTAGON REQUEST
THAT ISRAEL SUBMIT ARMS REQUIREMENTS FOR NEXT 5-10 YEARS.
RESULT WAS MATMON B WHICH PERES SAID TRIGGERED CRITICISM IN
THE PENTAGON.

2. RESULT OF MATMON B, ACCORDING TO PERES, WAS A CONSENSUS
IN THE PENTAGON THAT ISRAEL:

A. EXAGGERATED THE THREAT;

B. WAS TOO GREEDY;

C. WANTED TO EMPTY U.S. ARMS STORES;

D. WAS TOO HASTY IN R&D;

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E. WAS STRONGER THAN SHE ADMITTED: AND

F. WAS NOT SUFFICIENTLY CANDID (ISRAELI DEFENSE EXPORTS GIVEN AS EXAMPLE).

3. PERES ALSO CITED ALLEGED PENTAGON PERCEPTION THAT A STRONG ISRAEL WOULD AUTOMATICALLY BE INTRANSIGENT AND THAT A WEAKER ISRAEL WOULD BE MORE TRACTABLE. IN ANY CASE, HE SAID, THIS U.S. CRITICISM/HOSTILITY HAD CAUSED ISRAEL TO SUBMIT A REVISED REQUEST FOR ARMS- "A CORRECTIVE LIST".

(COMMENT: THIS IS FIRST WE HAD HEARD OF NEW LIST WHICH, ACCORDING TO PERES, DROPS SOME ITEMS WHICH THE U.S. HAD FOUND OBJECTIONABLE. HE CITED U-2 AIRCRAFT AS EXAMPLE, ADDING PARENTHETICALLY THAT ISRAEL WAS THINKING OF A SMALL SATELLITE IN ABOUT TEN YEARS TIME AS THE ANSWER TO HER RECONNAISSANCE PROBLEMS.)

4. HE ALSO CLAIMED THAT OTHER REQUESTS HAD BEEN REDUCED IN NUMBERS TO LEVELS THAT WERE MORE ACCEPTABLE TO THE U.S. ISRAEL NOW CONSIDERED HERSELF TO BE JUST A "REGULAR MILITARY BUYER" AND WAS REQUESTING NOTHING FROM U.S. ARMS STORES.

5. PERES ALSO HAD MEETINGS ON THE HILL. HIS PITCH THERE (AT SECDEF'S SUGGESTION, ACCORDING TO PERES) WAS THAT PRIMARY PURPOSE OF ARMS REQUESTS WAS TO MODERNIZE THE IDF, NOT TO ENLARGE IT. CONGRESSIONAL CONCERN HAD BEEN EXPRESSED ON TWO ISSUES: SIZE OF ISRAELI ARMS REQUESTS, AND OUTLOOK FOR PEACE IN MIDDLE EAST.

6. TURNING TO STATUS OF MILITARY SUPPLY, PERES SAID ISRAEL WAS STILL AWAITING ANSWERS (EXPECTED LAST JUNE) ON MANY ITEMS ON THEIR 1975 SHOPPING LIST. IN HIS OPINION THE NSC WAS THE STUMBLING BLOCK. HE SAID HE WAS TALKING ABOUT THINGS LIKE TANKS, GUNS, AND APC'S, "BREAD AND BUTTER" EQUIPMENT, NOT ANYTHING "SENSATIONAL". (THIS SEEMED TO IMPLY ISRAELI SATISFACTION WITH U.S. APPROVALS OF THE MORE GLAMOROUS ITEMS: F-15, LANCE, LASER GUIDED BOMBS, HAWKEYE AIRCRAFT, ETC.)

7. COMMENT: DURING HIS COMING VISIT, PERES RABIN IS NOT LIKELY TO INVOLVE HIMSELF IN SPECIFIC ARMS REQUESTS. HOWEVER, CONFIDENTIAL

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HE MIGHT WELL RAISE THE GENERAL ISSUE OF "OVERDUE" APPROVALS MENTIONED BY PERES AND IT IS PERES' STATED IMPRESSION THAT THESE APPROVALS MAY WELL BE PURPOSELY WITHHELD UNTIL RABIN VISIT. THE LEVEL OF MILITARY AID WILL PROBABLY BE OF MORE CONCERN TO RABIN THAN PARTICULAR ITEMS.
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